

Improving University City Without Using Taxpayer Dollars

By Council President Scott Peters, First District

It's no secret that community services have felt the pinch as the city struggles to pay down the pension deficit. But what you might not know is that there's another way we ensure continued improvements in the infrastructure in University City, without using taxpayer dollars.

University City has two alternative funding mechanisms for infrastructure such as parks, libraries and roads. In the northern portion of University City we have a Facilities Benefit Assessment ("FBA") and in the south we have a Developer Impact Fee ("DIF").

In University City, a developer getting ready to pull a building permit has to pay a fee into the FBA or the DIF fund. That money is then used by the city to build infrastructure projects, in specified areas throughout the community.

A number of new projects in University City have been funded by the FBA, including the new park and library along Nobel Drive, the construction along Miramar Road and the undercrossing on Judicial Drive at La Jolla Village Drive. In fact since I was elected to the City Council in 2000, we've spent over \$30 million in FBA funds on neighborhood improvements. We've completed the Nobel Drive interchange at Miramar Road, improved the landscaping and installed a new public bathroom at Doyle Park, constructed a traffic signal at Eastgate Mall and Easter Way, and successfully widened La Jolla Village Drive.

In a growing community such as University City, millions of FBA dollars are raised each year to make sure that new developments have adequate infrastructure to support them. Every year, the city's FBA's are updated to keep costs current and make sure that the fee charged to developers in the area will adequately cover the infrastructure contained in the community plan.

In an older community like South UC, development happens less frequently so fewer DIF dollars are generated. Since 1987, we've collected about \$250,000 in impact fees which have been used for pedestrian ramps and a traffic signal at Regents Road and Governor Drive and another signal at Governor and Edmonton.

Luckily, we've been able to take advantage of money from the state park bond Proposition 40 to fund neighborhood projects in South UC like the new playground and public bathroom at University Gardens, along Governor Drive. Those projects are improving the lives of the families that regularly use the park. We also used Prop 40 money to keep Swanson Pool open to the public for an additional 10 weeks this spring. It was scheduled to close due to city budget constraints.

With another tough budget year upon us, it's important that the city take advantage of funding sources like these to maintain the quality of life in our communities.

The mayor will present his new budget to the city council in the next few weeks. We'll then hold a series of day-long meetings on May 3, 4 and 5, at which we'll hear testimony from city staff and community members. I encourage you to attend one of these meetings to learn more about how our city puts its budget together.

Have a problem in your community? Want to let me know how you feel about an item coming before council? Call or email my office and make your voice heard. (619) 236-6611. scottpeters@sanidiego.gov.